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UTAH AVALANCHE FORECAST CENTER

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CATALOGING PREP.

USDA
Forest Service



in
partnership
with

NOAA National
Weather Service



JUN 13 1994



Each winter, millions of people work, travel, and play in the Wasatch Mountains. Skiers come from all over the world to experience Utah's steep mountains and deep, dry snow—"The Greatest Snow on Earth." Most people spend safe and enjoyable days in our mountains, but the combination of people, mountains, and snow creates the possibility for disaster—**AVALANCHE!**

Since the mining days of the 1800's, avalanches have killed more people in Utah than any other natural hazard. Each winter, as many as 10,000 avalanches occur in the Wasatch Mountains, ranging from harmless sluffs to mammoth slides that can destroy buildings, cars, and bury roads. Fortunately, avalanches can often be anticipated. Through careful analysis of snowpack, weather, and terrain, skilled avalanche professionals can not only predict the location and timing of avalanche hazards, but effectively communicate those hazards to the public. The Utah Avalanche Forecast Center does exactly that, with twice-daily recorded avalanche advisories and regular avalanche education seminars.

SERVICES

The USDA Forest Service Utah Avalanche Forecast Center (UAFC) is part of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest. The UAFC was established in 1980 to advise the general public of where, when, and why avalanches might occur, and to issue warnings when severe avalanche conditions exist. Although the UAFC concentrates its efforts on the backcountry—where the vast majority of avalanche accidents occur—it is an integral member of the Utah avalanche community, which includes ski resorts, the Utah Department of Transportation, the helicopter ski guide services, and search and rescue agencies. The UAFC acts as a clearinghouse of avalanche and mountain weather information for all these avalanche entities.

The Utah Avalanche Forecast Center provides:

1. **Avalanche Advisories** issued twice daily, with detailed information on snow and avalanche conditions for Salt Lake City, Logan, Ogden, Park City, Provo and Moab.
2. **Avalanche Warnings** issued through the news media to alert the public to severe avalanche conditions.
3. **Mountain Weather Forecast** issued twice daily, available to the public and to the ski industry. These are the most accurate mountain weather forecasts available from a public agency.
4. **Avalanche Education** in the form of avalanche awareness talks, workshops, and university avalanche classes, as well as local, state, and national news media contacts.



BENEFITS

The services provided by the Utah Avalanche Forecast Center benefit the entire skiing industry, as well as everyone using Utah's mountains in winter. Keeping Utah's snow in the news and avalanches out is good business for everyone.

THE BENEFITS ARE:

Saved Lives. Despite a steady increase in winter use of the Wasatch Mountains, there has not been a corresponding increase in avalanche fatalities. Since 95 percent of all accidents occur when people trigger the avalanche that catches them, avalanche accidents are a matter of choice, not chance. The UAFC provides quality information and education which allows people to make safe choices in Utah's mountains. Because of this, Utah enjoys a low avalanche fatality rate compared to other mountain states, even though the Wasatch Mountains have the highest concentration of winter use in the country and some of the most hazardous avalanche terrain.

Reduced Costs. Accurate mountain weather forecasts allow for more efficient avalanche control, shorter road closures, lower snow removal costs, and minimized property damage. Information sharing between the National Weather Service, the Utah Department of Transportation and the local ski areas is facilitated by the UAFC. This information sharing reduces the uncertainty in avalanche stability evaluation.

Increased Avalanche Awareness. During the 1992-93 season over 127,000 people called the UAFC avalanche advisory, with over 1,000 calls per day during high use periods. The UAFC avalanche advisory undoubtedly increased avalanche awareness and helped avoid avalanche hazards in the backcountry.



FACT SHEET

Office. The UAFC is located in the Forecast Office of the National Weather Service at the Executive Terminal of the Salt Lake City International Airport.

Staff. Four full-time forecasters share the responsibilities of a 7-day work week from November through April. Three cover the northern Wasatch Mountains and one covers the La Sal Mountains near Moab.

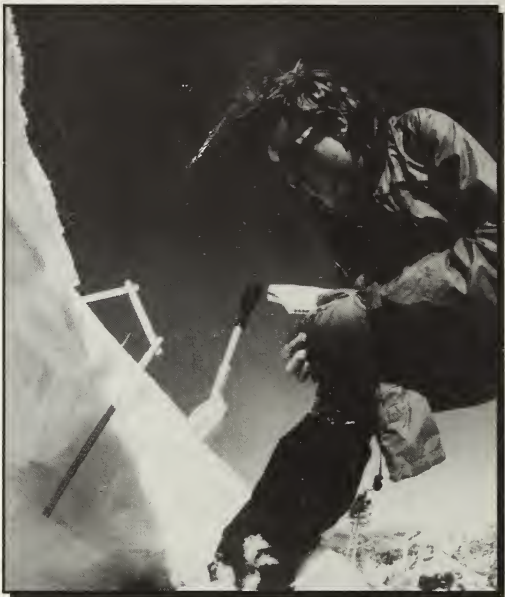
Range. The UAFC is primarily responsible for the back-country areas of the Wasatch Mountains over a distance of 150 miles, from the Utah-Idaho border to Spanish Fork Canyon and also the La Sal Mountains near Moab.

Avalanche Hotlines. The UAFC maintains recorded avalanche advisory phones in six Utah locations; Logan, Ogden, Salt Lake City, Provo, Park City, and Moab. These 3-minute messages provide information on current and future snow, avalanche, and mountain weather conditions. In addition, a 5-minute recorded message provides more detailed information. During the 1992-93 season, over 127,000 people called the avalanche hotlines, with over 1,000 on some days.

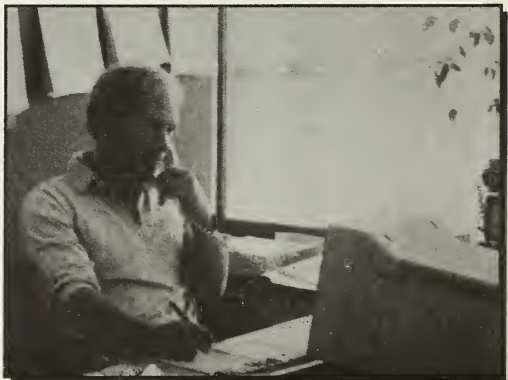
Education. Each year, the UAFC staff gives 20-30 avalanche talks, lectures, and workshops, with audiences of 2,000-3,000 people. In addition, UAFC efforts reach 100,000 people through local television, radio and newspapers, and several million through contacts with the national news media.

Funding. The USDA Forest Service funds the UAFC, with help from the Friends of the Utah Avalanche Forecast Center, a private, tax-exempt fundraising organization. The National Weather Service provides in-kind funding in the form of facilities and weather forecasting equipment.

Administration. The Utah Avalanche Forecast Center is a USDA Forest Service program in partnership with the NOAA National Weather Service.



The four, full-time UAFC professionals provide the public over 70 years of combined experience in avalanche forecasting, avalanche control, and winter mountaineering. The job requires a strong background in avalanche safety and snow stability evaluation, in addition to skills in meteorology, computers, education, writing, and public speaking. The staff are members of the American Association of Avalanche Professionals (AAP).



FUTURE

The UAFC is at a crucial turning point in its history as demands for services continue to grow each year. Calls increase by 10-25 percent each season; the forecast area has quadrupled; requests for avalanche education have tripled; and the amount of information provided to the public has doubled.

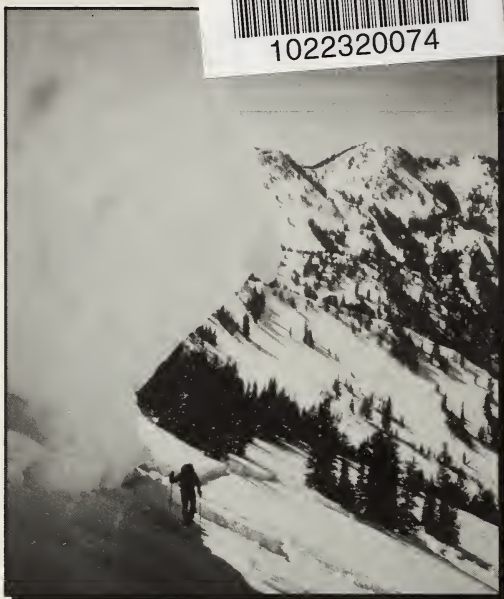
Because the UAFC benefits the entire State, as well as many other organizations, other partners may be needed to help fund the UAFC. Greater community ownership of the UAFC will allow the program to survive and expand, thereby fulfilling all the demands for services. To fulfill these projected demands, the UAFC would need to:

1. **Hire an additional avalanche professional** to help cover the expanded forecast area.
2. **Expand the program of avalanche education** to ensure that quality avalanche education is available in Utah.
3. **Improve the accuracy of the avalanche and mountain weather advisories** to provide the most useful information to backcountry travelers in avalanche terrain.
4. **Install additional remote weather stations** to better predict changes in mountain weather and snowpack conditions.
5. **Install additional telephone lines** to facilitate the increased demand.

The Utah Avalanche Forecast Center is committed to providing accurate avalanche and mountain weather information, along with quality avalanche education. Our job is to keep Utah's skiers safely on top of "The Greatest Snow on Earth"—not buried beneath it.



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Recorded avalanche and mountain weather information is available by calling the following numbers:

In Salt Lake City
(801) 364-1581

In Provo
(801) 374-9770

In Ogden
(801) 621-2362

In Park City
(801) 649-2250

In Logan
(801) 752-4146

In Moab
(801) 259-7669

A detailed 5-minute recording is available by calling
(801) 364-1591.

Report any information regarding avalanche accidents or incidents to the Utah Avalanche Forecast Center by calling **1-800-662-4140.**

Tax deductible contributions to the Utah Avalanche Forecast Center are welcome. All correspondence should be addressed to:

Friends of the Utah Avalanche Forecast Center
4760 Highland Drive
Suite 219
Salt Lake City, UT 84117-5009